

Radiology pioneer

Dr. John Doppman retires

Dr. John L. Doppman retired last month after 36 years of service to the Clinical Center's Diagnostic Radiology Department, including 26 as its head.

Colleagues describe Dr. Doppman as a world-class angiographer, a dedicated teacher, a generous friend, and all-around good guy. He is a self-described workaholic, who has authored or co-authored 516 scientific papers and 38 book chapters or books.

An interventional radiologist, Dr. Doppman developed, refined, and performed numerous semi-surgical radiologic procedures during his lengthy career.

According to longtime colleague Dr. Richard Chang, "His papers are constantly being cited, and the techniques he has developed are used throughout the world. I used one of his procedures earlier this week."

Recalling the early days of his specialty, Dr. Doppman said, "We started out doing angiograms," a technique that uses injections of radio-opaque dye to visualize blood vessels and tumors. "Then we discovered we could dilate vessels with balloons, drain abscesses, biopsy lungs, and put in central lines. We now do a lot of things that surgeons used to do, all under CT or x-ray control."

Later targeting his efforts at endocrinology – the study of glands and hormones – Dr. Doppman developed techniques for locating ectopic or elusive glandular tumors, which greatly improved patients' chances for successful surgery.

He also became interested in vascular malformations of the spinal cord. He developed a fundamental understanding of these challenging lesions and devised ways to visualize and treat them. His research culminated in the publication of the first text on this subject in 1969.

Dr. Doppman has been a part of other innovations in radiology that have revolutionized clinical care – procedures we take for granted today and that save us from invasive exploratory surgery.

"While I've been here, ultrasound, CT scanning, interventional radiology,

and magnetic resonance imaging have all developed," he said. "In addition to running the department, a lot of my responsibility was making sure we were state of the art in diagnostic radiological equipment. We had one of the first CT scanners and the 3rd or 4th MRI scanner in the country. It's been a great pleasure to guide radiology through this period of immense innovation."

Dr. Doppman earned his medical degree cum laude at Yale in 1953. He completed an internship at Mercy Hospital, in his hometown of Springfield, Mass., and planned a career in general practice. But after serving 3 years in the Navy, Dr. Doppman decided that general medicine wasn't for him, and began searching for a specialty.

"Radiology was ideal, because it presented diagnostic challenges and the chance to participate in therapies without being the primary care physician." He returned to the East for a radiology residency at the Hospital of St. Raphael, in New Haven, Conn. He was also a Fullbright Fellow in Radiologic Research at the Hammersmith Hospital, London, in 1959.

He joined the Clinical Center in 1964 as deputy chief of the Diagnostic Radiology Department. Except for a 2-year stint as a radiology professor at the University of California, San Diego, he has been with the Radiology Department ever since.

Dr. Doppman received many honors for his work, including the Gold Medal from the Society of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology (1997), an organization of which he was also a founding member and past president (1983); a Gold Medal from the American Roentgen Ray Society (1998); the Copeland Award from M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (1992); and the PHS Distinguished Service Medal (1982), the highest award granted by PHS. His love of mentoring was recognized in his being the 1997 recipient of the NIH Distinguished Clinical Teacher Award. He also received



John L. Doppman, M.D.

the CC Director's Award (1997) and the NIH Director's Award (1999).

Dr. Doppman has presented many named lectures and is an honorary member of the radiological societies of England, Ireland, Germany, and Hungary, as well as of the American Society of Endocrine Surgeons.

Reflecting on his years at the Clinical Center, Dr. Doppman said, "It's been a great place to work. All the CC directors have been very generous to radiology. It's an expensive specialty, but it's absolutely critical because the serious clinical problems end up in radiology. We can provide definitive answers, and sometimes we can even have a hand in correcting the problem itself."

Clinical Center Director Dr. John Gallin sums up the feelings of many: "For many years John Doppman has been one of the pillars of the NIH clinical research community. In addition to being a very strong clinical scientist, he has been one of the most important clinicians the Clinical Center has had. His enthusiasm and skill helping with difficult clinical situations are unmatched. Any time of the day or night, he would lend assistance to solve difficult diagnostic or therapeutic problems. You always felt you had the very best when Dr. Doppman was working with one of your patients. We are all disappointed that his retirement has become a reality, and we wish him the very best."

—by Sue Kendall